



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy

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MEMORANDUM DM- 06-07

TO: All Underground Coal Mine Operators

FROM: Frank A. Linkous
Frank A. Linkous, Chief

SUBJECT: *Alternative Seal Designs*

DATE: October 12, 2006

Due to events earlier this year in West Virginia and in Kentucky, the integrity of alternative seal construction is in question. The Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy's Division of Mines (DM) has and will continue to accept the Mine Safety and Health Administration's (MSHA) approval and certification of alternative seals. As MSHA has withdrawn all approvals of alternative seal designs, DM must also withdraw all approvals of alternative seal designs, including solid concrete seals allowing the use of angle iron in lieu of hitching.

Future alternative seal construction designs must be submitted to MSHA on a mine-by-mine and a location-by-location basis; seals must be designed and certified by a professional engineer to withstand a minimum 50-psi explosion; and sealing plans must also meet other requirements as detailed in the enclosed copy of Program Information Bulletin No. PIB P06-16. MSHA technical staff will evaluate the sealing plans to determine if the seals meet all requirements of PIB P06-16.

Henceforth, a copy of all alternative seal designs meeting the requirements of PIB P06-16 including sealing method, location, and sequence of construction must be submitted for approval to DM. The DM will also evaluate the seal designs and take into consideration relative comments by the MSHA technical group prior to issuing approval of the sealing plans.

Solid concrete block seals hitched into the ribs and floor, as described in 30 CFR Part 75.335, are deemed "approved" by DM and may be used at any time upon approval of seal location and sequence of construction. As most bleeder plans include the solid concrete block with the optional angle iron in lieu of hitching, in order to use the solid concrete block seals, you must resubmit seal construction plans without the provision to utilize the angle iron.

If you have any question regarding this change or need assistance with any other coal mining plans, please do not hesitate to contact the DM technical section at 276-523-8229. Thank you.

dm
Enclosure